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IN his *Lectures,* first published in 1783, Hugh Blair summed up contemporary Scots critical opinion by assessing the value of a literary work according to the degree of emotional response it evoked. His declaration that

> we are pleased with ourselves for feeling as we ought, and for entering, with proper sorrow, into the concerns of the afflicted.[1]

reads rather quaintly now as an example of the way in which the self-consciously upright members of the *literati* tried to combine the offices of art critic and moral adviser in their efforts to discover a general criterion on which aesthetic judgments could be made. This muddling of aesthetics and ethics was the result of a development of the idea that "taste," that is, the power of judging, was a purifying influence upon mankind. Moral philosophers, nourished in an atmosphere of Newtonian scientism, invariably analysed the feelings in their quest for the Good, and those who sought the Beautiful relied a great deal on the methods and findings of the moralists, justifying their dependence by identifying the Beautiful with the Good and the True. Francis Hutcheson's version of the humanitarian doctrine of the Cambridge neo-Platonists, first made into a system by Shaftesbury,[2] gave encouragement to the idea that the sharing of others'

1 *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres* (6th ed. London, 1796, 3 vols). III, 294. Blair's conclusion is clearly derived from Hutcheson's *Inquiry* (vide n. 2, infra) and probably owes something to Steele's article on the drama of sensibility in *Spectator* No. 502, Oct. 6th, 1712.

2 *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725). Reference should be made here to Professor R. S. Crane's paper: "Suggestions Toward a Genealogy of the Man of Feeling," prepared in April, 1934, and later published in *Studies in the Literature of the Augustan Age* (Michigan 1952), 207-208. The anti-Stoical sermons and writings of

emotions might give pleasure, and Hume, Kames, Campbell, Beattie, Blair and other "emotional logicians" all admitted that a man might feel joys and sorrows with his neighbours no less acutely than on his own account.

This stress on the sympathetic feelings in connection with art found popular expression in Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759),[3] which, like Hutcheson's *Inquiry,* drew upon Shaftesbury's extension of the creed of universal benevolence. Benevolism urged men to sympathise with the feelings of others regardless of self-interest and, in terms of literary criticism, had a much more powerful appeal than any abstract theory of aesthetics—everyone founded on a "sense of beauty" capable of development in every individual. Henry Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling* dealt with tears and a code of moral behaviour "delightfully intermingled"— in other words, it moved the reader and taught him simple ethical principles, without setting up any intellectual barrier to the right kind of appreciation. Blair, referring to the moral reformation in the English theatre, mentions Steele's *Conscious Lovers* as a comedy which

> aims at being sentimental, and touching the heart by means of the capital incidents; it makes our pleasure arise, not so much from the laughter it excites, as from the tears of affection and joy which it draws forth.[4]

Adam Smith explained many kinds of emotion with reference to this doctrine of sympathy, and his pronouncement on the function of poetry is typical of the vague theorising which the so-called philosophy of the sentiments encouraged in critics. He declared that

> Poetry . . . is capable of expressing many things fully and distinctly . . . such as the reasonings and judgments of the understanding; the ideas, fancies and suspicions of the imagination; the sentiments, emotions and passions of the heart.[5]

mid-seventeenth-century Latitudinarian divines in England and the wide dissemination of translations of French Courtesy books throughout Europe after 1670 anticipated Shaftesbury's *Characteristicks* by nearly half a century. The Scots critics, however, took their cue from Hutcheson, himself a disciple of Locke. *Vide* also Ernest Tuveson, "The Importance of Shaftesbury," *English Literary History,* XX, (1953), 267-299.

3 With reference to the start of the Blair-Kames-Beattie trend, readers should note the 30 MS *Lectures* (1748-1751) by Adam Smith which were discovered and edited by J. M. Lothian of King's College, Aberdeen University [for publication by Nelsons].

4 *Lectures,* ed. cit., III, 356.

5 *Essay on the Imitative Arts.*

The argument that poetry is "to the heart," if argument it may be called, occurs again and again in the criticism of the period. It is perhaps the most characteristic motif in the works of the Scots and "sentimental logic" forms the basis for their theory of taste from Kames and Gerard to Beattie and Blair. Newton's "science of nature" became Kames' "science of mind", that is to say, an empirical psychology rooted in the old theory of associative attraction. To say that a poem affected the heart was simply a loose way of approving the poet's understanding, intuitive or calculated, of human emotional experience, particularly of the softer emotions like joy and grief.

Scots theories of tragedy, for example, starting with that of Hume in Book II of the *Treatise of Human Nature,* all indicate a growing insistence on extending the scope of the emotions traditionally associated with tragedy and on softening them. Those of pity and fear lost much of their violence and concentration and were multiplied into those connected with fellow-feeling. Beattie, in his *Essay on Poetry,*[6] held that one cause of the pleasure of tragedy is the fact that we tend to heighten our own emotions by sympathising with those of the audience — a common eighteenth-century idea which rested communion among men upon a combination of sympathy and self-assertion. Blair made the same point when he asked

> Is not real distress often occasioned to the Spectators by the Dramatic Representations at which they *assist*?[7]

Henry Mackenzie found that the modern tendency was to emphasise love:[8] Corneille and Dryden had first argued that love made tragedy less morbid but subsequently modified their views on the ground that love and heroic qualities did not mix. Mackenzie saw that the passion of love on the stage had become a convention which made the hero forget his more responsible kingly or patriotic duties — a sequence of events which, in Mackenzie's opinion, was likely to compel a young mind to believe that successful love is the only felicity in life. What really disturbed him was the possibility that the power of poetry and the eloquence of sentiment might mesmerise a youthful spectator into mistaking "wrong" for "right" so that the stage would cease to be a reliable instrument of moral education.

6 *Essays: on Poetry and Music as they affect the Mind: on Laughter and Ludicrous Composition* (1776).
7 *Lectures,* III, 293.
8 "Essay on the Moral Effects of Tragedy," *Lounger,* Nos. 27 and 28.

Arguments of this kind must be absorbed against the background of the time, when the "live" theatre was by no means free from the "Devil's taint' and moderates like Mackenzie and Blair felt that they had to be on the defensive against implied charges of immorality. Hence they were continually issuing pompous warnings against the substitution of impulse in the place of higher principles of conduct based on reason or reflection. Kept in its place, love was accepted as a legitimate element of tragedy; what the critics insisted upon was that it should be disciplined and not allowed to usurp the place of "nobler" elements. The character thus endowed would then illustrate, as in their opinion it should, a balance between feeling and reflection and so become a visual aid to morality. Thus we have William Richardson describing Lear as a "man of mere sensibility" whose complete reliance on feeling had encompassed his own destruction and Hamlet as a man with an acute sense of virtue totally out of key with the intriguing Machiavellian type of society in which he had been brought up.[9]

These critics went a step further than Kames and his school, for they perceived the shortcomings of a psycho-sociological criticism which measured the mental qualities of others by our own. Shakespeare in fact provided an ideal example of minds different from our own, at least in degree; the murderer driven by ambition and a desire to live up to his own image of himself, the gullible man, the noble mind in decay and so on, and his plays showed that an academic knowledge of internal feelings was insufficient to allow a critic complete insight into human nature. With the notable exception of Hume, the Scots assumed that the realm of art was also that of real life so that art implied an attempt to create real emotions.[10] The characters in a play were therefore liable to judgment on moral grounds and such a process was considered an aesthetic process, in spite of the fact that it neglected dramatic form. The tragic heroes supposedly illustrated relations between self-interest and society, so that *Hamlet,* for example, showed the manner in which temperament could bring

[9] *Essays on Shakespeare's Dramatic Characters* (1784), 58-9: & *vide* "Essay on the Character and Tragedy of Hamlet" *Mirror* 99 & 100, [April 18 & 22, 1780], by Mackenzie. Ernest Tuveson's "The Importance of Shaftesbury" (cf. n. 2, *supra*), discusses the critics' particular interest in *Hamlet,* a play which fitted in well with their theories.

[10] In this connection *vide* Ralph Cohen, "The Transformation of Passion: a Study of Hume's Theories of Tragedy" *Philological Quarterly,* XLI (April, 1962), 450-464.

about a lack of balance between the "moral sense" and the emotions. Hamlet's tragic situation was brought about by his inability to master powerful feelings and not by any chance external grouping of hostile forces. Kames disapproved of *Romeo and Juliet* because its catastrophe relied on blind chance, hence destroying the chain of "ideas." *Othello,* on the other hand, is logically developed and he praises it.[11] Beattie's disapproval of tales of calamity was less theoretical; he said that they fatigued and overwhelmed the soul and had a bad effect upon readers especially when innocent characters are made to suffer. Both critics object to the offence against moral justice and Kames makes it clear that attention to the principles of emotional logic would ensure morality. On such a theory, the didactic possibilities of the plays were endless; Shakespeare, who filled his works with a multitude of examples of the variability of human nature, provided the critics with a test-case on which to try out their "science of mind" and speculate on the ethics of man in society.

Most discussions of tragedy were supported by a solid reading of neo-classic commentators on the subject; Hume, Kames, Campbell, Beattie, Blair, Mackenzie and Richardson were all well-versed in past theory[12] and tried with some success to make fresh contributions to the existing fund of ideas. The same cannot be said, however, for their examinations of the comic, which in general contrived to conceal their lack of depth behind a skilful handling of previous theory.[13] Beattie's was typical and as might be expected, confined itself to a treatment of "sympathetic" laughter. Everyone had the power to appreciate humour "sentimentally," according to Beattie, because its result "is at once both natural and innocent."[14] His illustrations from comic literature bear out that his own test for the comic is its power to appeal to the natural human emotion that makes a man laugh.

11 Henry Home, Lord Kames, *The Elements of Criticism* (1762: 5th ed. Lond 1774, 2 vols.), II, 381.

12 *Vide* Earl R. Wasserman, "The Pleasures of Tragedy," *English Literary History*, XIV (1947), 283-307. This deals with Hume's predecessors in the field.

13 Addison discussed Hobbes' theory in *Spectator*, No. 47 (April 24, 1711) and Hutcheson modified it in his *Essay on Laughter*, contributed to the *Dublin Journal*, reprinted in 1729 and again in 1734, latterly as *Hibernicus' Letters (made by James Arbuckle)*. These discussions provided most of the material drawn upon by subsequent eighteenth-century investigators.

14 *Essay on Laughter and Ludicrous Composition* (3rd ed., corrected, London, 1779), 303.

Unfortunately, he does not define this emotion and is content to declare that the kind of stimuli required to excite it are contained in such incidents as are designed to bring out the charms of virtue and the odiousness of vice. Mackenzie's assertion that the subject of modern comic writing is "the history of the human heart in trying situations"[15] summed up the attitude of all "enlightened" readers. For him the appeal of a character like Falstaff lay in a peculiar combination of humour and grossness, which draws sympathy from the audience.[16] The elder Warton had made a similar observation with regard to Caliban in whom, according to the writer, Shakespeare had succeeded in creating a convincing character outside the bounds of human experience by attending judiciously to detail and mingling human and sub-human characteristics.[17] What both Mackenzie and Warton meant, although they did not express it very well, was that the human elements in Falstaff and Caliban rendered these characters acceptable in terms of human sympathies.

Blair takes the familiar line that humour is an instrument of moral censure and ultimately of moral education, and claims that its inclusion in a work of literature is justifiable only if it accomplishes this end. Campbell had stated, unoriginally, that the object of laughter was invariably a group of things "in which there is some striking unsuitableness."[18] Blair applies this Hutchesonian theory to comedy which, he claims, should hold up to ridicule the parts of men's characters

> . . . which raise in beholders a sense of impropriety, which expose them to be censured; and laughed at by others, or which render them troublesome in civil society.[19]

This unenlightening statement is as far as any of the Scots goes towards working out a comprehensive theory of comedy; like the *Mirror* essayists Blair approved of the stage and the novel only so far as they were intended to purge society of its ills and encourage in an audience the emotions of goodwill.

15 "Essay on Comedy," *Lounger*, Nos. 49 & 50 (January 7 & 14, 1785).

16 "Essay on the Character of Falstaff," *Lounger*, Nos. 29 & 30 (May 20 & 26, 1786).

17 *Adventurer*, No. 97 (October 9, 1753)

18 George Campbell, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1776; 2nd ed., London, 1801, 2 vols.), I, 79. Campbell is following Hutcheson, whose explanation was founded on the notion of contrast or incongruity.

19 *Lectures*, III, 332.

The implication behind this view of the function of the writer is more complex than at first sight appears. In his *Essay on Poetry*, Beattie starts off by asking the old question of whether the end of poetry is pleasure or instruction and answers it by stating that a poem ought to succeed in both respects before it merits the highest praise. Like Blair, Beattie did not believe that a poet ought to aim deliberately at instruction and ignore the reader's pleasure for he states clearly that if a poem does not please it has failed in its purpose. He qualifies this view by adding that in most cases a poet must introduce an element of instruction into his work if the general taste, that is, the preference of the majority of trained minds, is to be gratified. This amounts to a distinction between a poem's end as a literary achievement and its end as a social product for, if Beattie's theory is to be accepted, a poem, as a poem, need inculcate no moral values, though as a social force it should do so. The writer seems to imply that good poetry is not necessarily "good" by itself, but becomes wholly admirable only if it be also on the side of virtue, the natural disposition of the human mind. He exclaims:

> So true it is, that the bard who would captivate the heart must sing in unison to the voice of conscience.[20]

This is another recurrent theme in Scots criticism. Since poetry was supposed to be the voice of nature uncorrupted by custom, anything which touched the heart was endowed with virtue and therefore carried instruction along with it. Critics like Dryden and Johnson failed to explain whether the "instruction" which poetry ought to provide was instruction in the truth of human nature, virtuous and vicious alike, or whether it was moral instruction on ideal conduct. The argument of Beattie and other followers of Shaftsbury and Hutcheson, which was dependent on a purely hypothetical proneness of the human constitution to virtue, provided only a theoretical solution to this problem, by enlarging the meaning of the term "instruction." For the philosophers it meant not only the communication of fresh knowledge, but also that

> . . . which awakens our pity for the sufferings of our fellow creatures; promotes a taste for the beauties of nature: makes vice appear the object of indignation and ridicule; inculcates a sense of our dependence upon

20 *Essay on Poetry*, ed. cit., 16-17.

> Heaven; fortifies our minds against the evils of life; or promotes the love of virtue and wisdom, either by delineating their native charms, or by setting before us in suitable colours, the dreadful consequences of imprudent and immoral conduct.[21]

It thus became possible for critics to praise style and condemn matter in the same work; Kames and Blair object to Milton's picture of Sin and Death although they praise his power of description in painting it and all the Scots who wrote on Homer condemn the behaviour of his characters. Beattie himself attacked *Gulliver's Travels* because Swift's imagery was frequently "filthy and indecent" and, what was in his view worse, because "human nature itself is represented as the object of contempt and abhorrence."[22] That Swift was a moralist whose social ideals made him an ironic critic of things as he saw them was a possibility that never occurred to Beattie, who considered *The Tale of a Tub* to be without equal as a piece of humorous writing but observed sadly that it had a tendency "to produce, in the mind of the reader, some very disagreeable associations of the most solemn truths with ludicrous ideas."[23] Again, with reference to Smollett's *Roderick Random* and *Peregrine Pickle*, Beattie states that they are

> . . . two performances, of which I am sorry to say, that I cannot allow them any other praise, than that they are humorous and entertaining.[24]

At first reading such a statement appears to reflect no more than the fatuousness of the writer, but it nevertheless illustrates his consistent critical principle that literature must do more than please. If the function of literature were simply to please and nothing else, criticism like this ought to be favourable to any novelist. Beattie disapproved of Smollett because his two novels did not instruct as well as entertain; he did not consider that they might be included in the category of works depicting "the dreadful consequences of imprudent and immoral conduct," although this would surely have been permissible in the light of their matter. Criticism of fiction seems to have been based on different criteria from that of poetry probably because all the Scots started off under the disadvantage of believing that the

21 *Ibid.*, 120.
22 *Dissertations, Moral and Critical* (1783), 515-516.
23 *Ibid.*, 516.
24 *Ibid.*, 570.

novel, like the theatre, was a potential threat to morality. Both Beattie and Blair adhered to the neo-classic notion that the literary "kinds" were distinct from one another but neither explained why this should be. It seems evident, though, that the position of a literary *genre* in the hierarchy was determined by the extent of its capacity to draw out the sympathetic emotions. On such a scale, the dramatic and especially the tragic was placed highest and the novel lowest. Few allowances were therefore made for fiction which, at its best, would have been considered a stylised product of modern urban society, itself corrupt and remote from nature.

Another feature of Scots criticism at this time was its lack of a pronounced bias of the sophisticated kind such as existed during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the way in which it related poetic simplicity and moral purity. "Only an innocent mind can relish the effusions of real unaffected simplicity" exclaimed an anonymous contributor to the Edinburgh *Weekly Magazine,*[25] while another, writing to the *Scots Magazine,* informs his readers that

> Simplicity is the native dress of truth, and a sincere love of the latter is seldom without a taste for the former.[26]

This links up with the Scots quest for original genius. When these critics sought a genius, they were inclined to look for him either in the remote past, or in a modern unsophisticated environment to which urban decadence had not penetrated. The notion that inspiration was more at liberty to function when human nature was uncorrupted by sophisticated customs led Beattie and his contemporaries to regard purity and simplicity of poetic language as an ideal genuine emotional expression, unattainable by the educated writer.[27] For this reason "correct" qualities were not expected of primitive poets, nor of modern poets with untutored ability whose natural origins and environment had preserved their sublime imaginations.

25 *Weekly Magazine or Edinburgh Amusement,* XXIV, (April 14, 1774) by "A Lover of Poetry."

26 "On Taste and Elegance," *Scots Magazine,* LV, (June, 1793).

27 Mackenzie, who succeeded Hume as a patron of "original genius" and wrote one of the earliest reviews of Burns' Kilmarnock volume, said in a letter to Elizabeth Rose: "One great excellence of (ancient compositions) is a certain manly unaffected simplicity which we do not always find in our best modern performances. We are often obliged to resort to Expression for that energy which they found in Idea." December 22, 1776: (*MS 647,* National Library of Scotland).

This seeking after simplicity brought the critics to the ballads; even a critic as far back in time as Addison had been fascinated by the "natural" qualities of ballads and the second half of the century saw a growing interest in folk-poetry which was not merely the result of a focus on the past. Percy summarised the literary interests of many of his contemporaries when he wrote

> In a polished age, like the present, I am sensible that many of these reliques of antiquity will require great allowances to be made for them. Yet have they, for the most part, a pleasing simplicity, and many artless graces, which in the opinion of no mean critics, have been thought to compensate for the want of higher beauties. and if they do not interest the imagination, are frequently found to interest the heart [28]

and, speaking of Scots music and ballads, David Herd asserted that

> the characteristic excellence of both . . . is a forcible and patriotic symplicity, which at once lays strong hold on the reflections, so that the heart itself may be considered as an instrument which the Bard or Minstrel harmonises, touching all its strings in the most delicate and masterly manner.[29]

Both Beattie and Blair drew attention to the qualities inherent in simple music and verse which made them dear to the heart of the Scot and they noted that the inspiration behind the ballads (under which general head they included genuine or spurious ballads, songs and in fact any poem written in short stanzas) was the same inspiration as that which gave expression to great poetry and consisted of the urge of strong emotions. The "anonymous" verse on the title-page of the Kilmarnock edition of Burns's poems displayed such clear prejudices in favour of the natural origin of poetry as to suggest a calculated approach to the critics:

> The Simple Bard, unbroke by rules of Art,
> He pours the wild effusions of his heart;
> And, if inspir'd, 'tis Nature's pow'rs inspire
> Her's all the melting thrill, and her's the
> [kindling fire.[30]

28 *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1767: pref.)
29 *Ancient and Modern Scots Songs, Heroic Ballads* (Edinburgh, 1769), pref. iii.
30 Robert Burns, *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*, (Kilmarnock, 1786).

As theory, this strongly emotional criterion was a convenient generalisation which enabled a "romantic" or subjective judgment of literature to support or even at times to supersede a neo-classic or formal method of assessment. It did not take into account the possibility that literature might have certain effects not connected with the rousing of emotions, nor did it consider that a given work might not necessarily affect every individual to the same emotional extent. On such a standard of judgment, there was a danger of placing inferior works, which had no other aim than that of being sentimental, above masterpieces of wider scope in which the rhetorical evocation of such emotion was not the outstanding quality. Application of this standard failed to enlighten readers as to why a poet like Milton was of the first rank; in fact, the versifiers of the eighteenth-century, like Logan, Michael Bruce or Wilkie, to cite but three, were dubbed "geniuses" with less hesitancy than Milton was, since their appeal to the sympathetic emotions was more obvious and immediate. If a poet wrote "to the heart" and supplied incidents calculated to affect the tender sentiments of the reader, then he was sure of praise from the critics. Such an approach to criticism had been carefully worked out in theory, but in practice it became loose and careless, partly because of its limited emotional concerns and partly because of the critics' failure to build up a vocabulary of precise terminology by which the complicated effects of literature could be accurately described. Periodical reviewers during the last quarter of the century habitually appraised insignificant poets in the same terms as were customarily applied to Spenser and Milton. At the same time, there was no proper outlet for appreciation of new and original poetic work, such as that of Fergusson and Burns in Scots. The critics were instead bemused by Macpherson's "Ossian" poems. Blair observed that the outstanding characteristic of Ossianic poetry was the mingling of heroic and elegiac elements, the paradox of joy in tears—"the joy of grief"—when the very sadness of the world encouraged the benevolent emotions and the recurrent theme was that of the pathos of youth in love together with the eternal loneliness and transience of all creatures. The "joy of grief" was the highest joy which life held for Fingal and was a most powerful emotional expression, precisely, in fact, what critics were looking for in poetry. Their hearts were touched by the VIth Book of *Fingal*:

> 'Swaran,' said the king of hills, 'today our fame is greatest. We shall pass away like a dream. No sound

> will remain in our fields of war. Our tombs will be lost in the heath. The hunter shall not know the place of our rest. Our names may be heard in song. What avails it, when our strength hath ceased?'

or by the conclusion of the *Songs of Selma*:

> Why does Ossian sing? Soon shall he lie in the narrow house, and no bard shall raise his fame! Roll on, ye dark-brown years; ye bring no joy on your course! Let the tomb open to Ossian, for his strength has failed.

Taking such fustian as an example, it is historically clear that the question which "Ossian" raises in connection with literary criticism concerns the relationship of the poems to the critical and psychological requirements of the time; in other words, one must wonder to what extent Macpherson conditioned the practical criticism of Blair and his school and *vice-versa*. It is evident that Macpherson wished to please the critics and that he wrote his poetry accordingly, for *Fingal* reflects many, if not all, of the prejudices of the *literati;* in it, and in the remainder of the Ossianic "fragments," we find what amounts to a testimonial to their author's capacity to know his public. Ossian's "characteristic excellence,' according to Blair, lay in his ability to "paint to the heart' and the *Critical Dissertation* is mainly concerned with pointing out this quality in the light of Blair's theory of "simple" poetic origins. In the works of Ossian we find, states Blair

> tenderness and even delicacy of sentiment . . . our hearts are melted with softest feelings, and at the same time elevated with the highest ideas of magnanimity generosity and true heroism [31]

qualities which are found in Homer, Virgil, Dante, Tasso Shakespeare and Milton. Michael Bruce and Burns were later revealed to the public in the same terms; they understood the sentimental side of human nature and their poetry excelled in the pathetic.

Yet the theory was significant, even if the manner of its practice was not. Wordsworth's main idea regarding the nature of the imagination was that it consisted in seeing everything in its human relations or sympathies; the possession of such power, according to both Wordsworth and Coleridge, distinguished imagination from mere fancy. The Scots were thus expressing an idea which was to become fundamental in nineteenth-century

[31] *A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian* (1763), 11.

criticism when they demanded of a poet that he should "paint to the heart as well as to the fancy." Such an approach to the mind of the poet, denying or distrusting his artifice and applauding his "sincerity," may strike the modern analytic critic as naïve, but it comes at least as near as he does to understanding the success of a poet like Burns. Burns touched a chord which his rivals failed to touch and no amount of descriptive criticism will explain exactly what it was that Burns's verses did to their early readers.

Henry Mackenzie's words of encouragement to his cousin Elizabeth Rose:

> You need not be in the smallest degree afraid of pronouncing on the merit of Poetry . . . it is felt, and therefore it is excellent. 'Tis but a cold-blooded quality that first discovers its excellence, and then pronounces it to be felt [32]

relegates the "science of mind" to a secondary position and, by extolling the superiority of "men of feeling," makes known a conception of the critic's art which, in spite of its psychological origins in the theories of literary aestheticians, is anti-intellectual. Obsession with the virtue of the romantic ideal from Sidney onward was not favourable to the development of sound theory, wedded to equally sound practice, particularly since the majority of the theorists did not themselves cultivate the art which they professed to discuss. The gradual movement towards simplicity and naturalness of situation and language which their essays reveal led inevitably to the poetic manifesto of the *Lyrical Ballads*, which, with the *Preface*, transformed the theories of Beattie and Blair into a more practicable scheme of things without, in fact, adding very much to what the latter had said. The Scots critics seem to have had a clearer notion of what the romantic poem was to be like than any of their English contemporaries, and within their rather severe limitations they tried very hard to define or at least describe it.

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[32] 12 May, 1770 (*MS 647*, National Library of Scotland).